

CAREY'S STRUGGLES FOR MISSIONARY WORK

February 8, 2000 (David W. Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061-0368, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -- In this modern era when most churches are concerned about missionary work, it is easy to forget the difficulty that William Carey encountered when he attempted to gain the support of 18th century English churches. The following is an excerpt from *A History of the Baptists* by Thomas Armitage. This was first published in 1890 and has been republished since, but is currently out of print. Our friend Brian Snider in Alabama is doing the hard work of scanning this important two-volume history for us, and I am proofing and formatting it for the web. The first volume is already online at the Way of Life Literature web site [<http://wayoflife.org/~dcloud>] under the History section of the End Times Apostasy Online Database, and we hope to add the second volume within the next couple of weeks. The electronic edition of Armitage's *History of the Baptists* is also being included in the Fundamental Baptist Library on CD which we are preparing. The target publication date is September 2000. It is designed to work both for IBM and Macintosh computer systems. We will give more information on this upcoming CD in coming months, the Lord willing. The following excerpt is from the section of Armitage's book on Baptists of Great Britain:

The English Baptists were greatly reduced in numbers by certain undermining influences in the early part of the eighteenth century, but since then the current has greatly changed, and they are now stimulated with new life. Andrew Fuller's 'Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation' has had much to do in awakening this zeal. This treatise was aimed directly against that hyper-Calvinism which denies all duty to God in the unregenerate, and refuses to call them to repentance and Christ. Fuller's book kept him in warm controversy for twenty years, but moderate Calvinism triumphed completely, and was followed by an awakening of the missionary spirit; chiefly under the labors of William Carey and Andrew Fuller. The first Baptist movement in foreign missions was made at a meeting of the Northampton Association in 1784. WILLIAM CAREY was born August 17th, 1761, at Paulersbury. His father was a weaver (a descendant of James Carey, curate of that parish from 1624 to 1630), also parish clerk and village schoolmaster, so that William had a fair common-school education. At fourteen he was bound an apprentice to a shoemaker, but his thirst for knowledge was so quenchless that he habitually worked with a book before him. Finding many Greek words which he could not understand, in a Commentary, he sought help of Tom Jones, a weaver, who had abused a classical education. He became familiar with the works of Jeremy Taylor and such other authors as he could command; and Thomas Scott, the commentator, predicted that this 'plodder' would prove no ordinary man. William Manning, a Dissenter, his shopmate, led him to Christ, and at twenty-two he was immersed in the river New, near Dr. Doddridge's chapel, Northampton, by John Ryland, Jr. The baptism of a poor journeyman shoemaker excited little interest, but Ryland chanced on a prophetic text that day: 'The last shall be first.' Carey's chief desire, after his conversion, was to qualify himself for usefulness, and his remarkable gift for acquiring languages soon made him master of the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German and French. He began to keep school, but could not govern; he said, 'The boys kept me,' and so he did not succeed well. Soon he removed to Moulton, and, under the advice of Mr. Sutcliff, applied to the Church at Olney for admission to the ministry. That high and mighty body condescended to take him into its membership, and, on hearing him preach, 'Resolved' that he be 'allowed' to preach elsewhere in small places, and that 'he should engage again on suitable occasions for some time before us, in order that further trial be made of his ministerial gifts.'

A year after this, June 16th, 1785, 'the case of Brother Carey was considered, and unanimous satisfaction with his ministerial abilities being expressed, a vote was passed to call him to the ministry at a proper time.' 'Call,' as here used, would mean license with us, and as the brother rather grew upon them, they licensed him to preach August 10th 'wherever the providence of God might open his way.' That way was opened first at Moulton, where he became pastor, working at his trade to prevent starvation, the Church being able 'to raise enough to pay for the clothes worn-

out in their service.' While teaching school, he reveled in Cook's 'Voyages Around the World,' and closely studied geography. He made a globe of leather, and traced the outlines of the earth upon it for his classes. Then the thought flashed upon him that four hundred millions of people had never heard of Christ, and that moment, surrounded by a handful of Northamptonshire urchins, with his eye on that russet globe, the great Baptist missionary enterprise was born. As is generally the case with Churches who pay their ministers next to nothing, certain cantankerous members made him much trouble. The records of the Church say that one sister 'neglected coming to hear,' and was excluded. Old Madame Britain was charged with 'excessive passion, tattling and tale-bearing, by which the peace of the Church was much broken.' They 'suspended and admonished her' to keep the unruly member under better subjection, and seem at last to have saved her, tongue and all. John and Ann Law kept the 'Workhouse,' and were charged with 'cruelty to the poor,' a charge found 'too true.' They were advised to resign their office, and were 'suspended till they do so.'

Carey removed to Leicester, where he served as pastor and predecessor to Robert Hall. There he determined to do something for the heathen and wrote on the subject. His 'Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathen' was published in 1792, but found few readers and produced little effect. To most of the Baptists his views were visionary and even wild, in open conflict with God's sovereignty. At a meeting of ministers, where the senior Ryland presided, Carey proposed that at the next meeting they discuss the duty of attempting to spread the Gospel amongst the heathen. Fuller was present, but the audacity of the proposition made him hold his breath, while Ryland, shocked, sprang to his feet and ordered Carey to sit down, saying: 'When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine!' Nothing daunted, Carey continued to preach in Harvey Lane, Leicester, to teach school, work on the bench, and pursue his studies. He gave Monday to languages, Tuesday to science and history, Wednesday to lecturing, Thursday to visiting, Friday and Saturday to preparation for the pulpit, and on Sunday he preached three times. At this period Dr. Arnold gave him the use of his superior library. What Ryland called the 'Antinomian Devil' made such havoc of his Church, however, that he was obliged to dissolve it and form a new one of better materials. Soon he was cheered on finding that Fuller, Sutcliff, Pearce and young Ryland held his views on foreign missions, although Stennett and Booth stood aloof. At the October meeting of ministers, 1791, Sutcliff preached on being 'Very jealous for the Lord of Hosts,' and Fuller on the 'Pernicious Influences of Delay,' when the meeting resolved that 'something should be done.'

The Association met at Nottingham, May 31st, 1792, when Carey preached his great sermon from Isa. 54:2,3; representing the Church as a poor widow living in a cottage by herself. The voice, 'Thy Maker is thy Husband,' told her to look for an increase of family; therefore, she must enlarge her tent, and 'expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God.' This appeal settled the question. The Churches were seized with a sense of criminal neglect; but even then they were about to adjourn without doing any thing but weep, when Carey seizing Fuller's hand, demanded that the first step be taken on the spot. His heart was breaking, and his sobs compelled the assembly to stop. It was resolved, 'That a plan be prepared against the next ministers' meeting at Kettering, for the establishment of a society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen.' Such a meeting was held October 2d, 1792, and at its close twelve men met in the parlor of Mrs. Wallis, a widow, and formed the first Baptist Missionary Society. Andrew Fuller was made Secretary, Reynold Hogg, Treasurer; with Ryland, Sutcliff, Carey and afterward Pearce, as the Committee of management. They then made a subscription out of their penury of , 13 2s. 6d. Pearce preached on the subject at home, and soon sent 'the surprising sum of , 70 to the Society.'

In April, 1793, Carey and Thomas started for India, despite the opposition of the East India Company, the indifference of their own brethren, and the disdain of the public; and did such missionary work there as has not been known since the Apostolic Age. For years, however, it was doubtful whether the mission would not result in disastrous failure. The Anglo-Indian government would not allow it to be established in their territory, and the missionaries found shelter in

Serampore, under the Danish governor. Here Carey printed the New Testament in Bengali, the first translation into a heathen tongue in modern times. Dr. Thomas, Carey's fellow-laborer, had given surgical attention to Krishna Pal, and in December, 1800, Dr. Carey immersed this native, together with his own son, Felix, in the Ganges, in the presence of a great multitude; soon after a second son was baptized. This faithful Hindu is the only converted heathen who has added an inspiring hymn to the songs of Christendom. He wrote the lines beginning with: 'O thou, my soul, forget no more.' In his conversion we have the first-fruits of the great Indian harvest which has followed. Since then, Christianity has wrought wonders in India, in the abolition of superstitious rites, the decline of caste and the elevation of morals.

Carey did not long engage in the active work of an evangelist. His support was light, he must master the Eastern languages, and for a time he earned his daily bread in an indigo factory. But when the Marquis of Wellesley founded a college at Fort William, in 1801, he found no man in India so fitted to fill the chair of Oriental languages as this despised missionary, who had been driven for refuge under an alien flag. He offered the post to Carey, it was accepted, and he became the leader of his age in Oriental literature and philosophy. He prepared grammars and lexicons in the Mahrata, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Telagu, Bengali and Bhotanta dialects. Wellesley pronounced his Sanskrit Grammar 'the source and root of the principal dialects throughout India.' He translated no fewer than twenty-four different versions of the Scriptures, with little aid from others, into the tongues spoken by one third of our race. [Note from Brother Cloud of Way of Life Literature: Carey actually hired many Hindu pundits to assist him in the translation work.] This was practically new work, the execution of which has enabled the Max Mullers of our day to add completeness to first attempts, by ripe scholarship. A child learns now what only the intellect of a Kepler and a Newton discovered. Well did Wilberforce say of Carey: 'A sublimer thought cannot be conceived than when a poor cobbler formed the resolution to give to the millions of Hindus the Bible in their own language.'

While Carey was quietly doing his work in India. Great Britain was kept in a ferment by war on the mission, which drew many of its ablest pens into the conflict, not only in the Reviews, but by the pamphlet and newspaper press. The Edinburgh Review constantly ridiculed the mission, denouncing the missionaries as 'fools,' 'madmen,' 'tinkers' and 'cobblers;' and many public men sided with that periodical. But the 'Quarterly' came to their defense, through noble men not Baptists, not the least amongst them being Dr. Adam Clark. In addition to much that the 'Quarterly' said was this: 'Only fourteen years have elapsed since Thomas and Carey set foot in India, and in that time have these missionaries acquired this gift of tongues. In fourteen years these "low-born and low-bred mechanics" have done more toward spreading the knowledge of the Scriptures among the heathen than has been accomplished, or even attempted, by all the world besides.' Carey had constant struggles to maintain his health, but he had great consolation in his family, for his three sons were all converted and consecrated to the missionary work by baptism and the laying on of his own hands.' But he was oppressed by sad trouble in England, in what is now known as the 'Serampore Controversy.' While in the employ of the British government he had received about , 80,000, all of which he had devoted, beyond a bare subsistence, to the establishment of churches, schools and the support of his fellow missionaries. This was no shield, however, against the most fiery and shameful attacks of some of his own brethren in England upon him and his work. In 1825 they rabidly accused the 'Serampore College' of possessing immense wealth, of extravagant living and the assumption of unwarranted power. For a time, excitement and abuse ran wild, and men in high position condescended to disgrace themselves in these unfounded assaults. The result was that the College stood aloof from the Society from 1827 to 1837, during which time Carey fell asleep in Jesus; for he died June 9th, 1834, the greatest missionary since the Apostle Paul. His dust reposes in the mission grounds which his own toil had secured for Christ, and his missionary work never stood more firmly than today.

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